



# A Short History of the Leveller Monochrome Supplement 1984 - 1988

**DISTORTED FACTS**

## **A Short History of the Leveller Monochrome Supplement 1984 – 1988**

*Monochrome*, or to give it its more official title, the *Monochrome Leveller Supplement*, was a tabloid-format, free radical newspaper, and a part of the left-alternative scene of 1980s London. It appeared consistently but irregularly from October 1983 to January 1988, almost lasting as long as its parent title, *The Leveller* (1976-82).

*A Short History of the  
Leveller Monochrome Supplement  
1984 – 1988*

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Published by some ex-members  
of the Monochrome collective

## ***Monochrome***

**1984 – 1988**

How did people get their alternative news and views in the dark days before the internet and social media? Where did memes and conspiracy theories begin in those times of blissful ignorance when most people, if they had heard of algorithms, probably thought they were something young people danced to in clubs? If you were looking in the 1980s UK for alternatives to mainstream media or what was distributed in the corner shop in the countryside or suburbs, it was only when you got to an inner city with an alternative bookshop or alternative media drop site that you found a plethora of other publications. There, instead of information bubbles picking you, you could pick your own from amongst titles ranging from left-wing political parties' mouthpieces such as *Tribune*, *Socialist Worker* and even the more respectable *Spectator* or *New Statesman*, to feminist ones like *Spare Rib*, via plenty of anarchist broadsheets, from the venerable *Freedom* and *Black Flag* to *Class War* and *Green Anarchist*.

They came in flavours to suit every taste. *The Socialist*



*Standard*, *New Internationalist*, *Split* ('Some People who Left IT' [*International Times*]), *The Voice* and *Peace News*, all vied to fill your head with the news you didn't get in the *Daily Mail* or on the BBC. In those days the de facto censor of what you could and couldn't read were the distributors, WH Smiths, Menzies and so on, who decided what got distributed to newsagents and bookshops. Usually they required a big budget marketing campaign to make it worth their while. This explained why alternative news purveyors had to be sought out elsewhere. Not that the distributors had a right-wing bias or anything.

Amongst all of these titles, one stood out: *Monochrome*, because it was free. It was also not allied to any particular political grouping. *Monochrome*, or to give it its more official title, the *Monochrome Leveller Supplement*, was a tabloid-format, free radical newspaper that appeared consistently but irregularly from October 1983 to January 1988, almost lasting as long as its parent (*The Leveller* (1976–82)).

Its origins lay in an attempt to relaunch that much better-known monthly political magazine, which was produced by a collective of what Wikipedia has described as a 'shifting coalition of radicals, socialists, Marxists, feminists, and others of the British left and progressive movements'.

In 1979 *The Leveller* was involved in a contempt of court / Official Secrets Act court case in relationship to an interview with a 'Colonel B', a former member of Signals Intelligence, which is/was based at GCHQ. Freelance journalists Duncan Campbell and Crispin Audrey were charged with unlawful disclosure and receipt of classified information, contrary to section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, and charges were later added under section 1 of the Act. The costs of the court

case meant the magazine's publishing company went into voluntary liquidation – though it was immediately relaunched under a new company, as a fortnightly rather than a monthly. The fortnightly then ceased publication shortly afterwards, though the new company continued in operation as Leveller Graphics.

After *The Leveller* ceased publication, some members of Leveller Graphics, which had become a community printshop offering typesetting and graphic design services, and which paid off *The Leveller's* debts – partly resulting from the court case – hoped to eventually relaunch *The Leveller*. As an initial step towards the relaunch, an open meeting attended by about 30 people decided upon the idea of a 'monochrome supplement'. At the time, many Sunday newspapers, when newspapers were still printed in black and white, used to publish 'colour supplements'. After the first few issues, the publication simply became known as *Monochrome*.

The printing costs of *Monochrome* were paid for by advertising, a concept that was relatively new to the alternative scene, and by Levellers Graphics. Adverts mainly came from lesbian and gay groups, community groups and indie record labels. Sections of the Greater London Council (GLC) also placed adverts. The newspaper developed a personality of its own which was quite different in style and content to the original biweekly *Leveller* magazine. The collective producing it held weekly meetings at the Leveller Graphics' office at 52 Acre Lane in Brixton, London, where several other cooperative and campaigning groups were located, such as Fly Press, wholefood distributor Wholesome Trucking, and a feminist collective. The editorial group was

an eclectic mix of socialists, anarchists, feminists, environmentalists, anti-apartheid activists, gay rights activists, and peace activists of various hues, and generally saw the publication as a wide platform for left alternative news, activism and culture.

A total of 21 issues were published. These came out irregularly, usually every two or so months. The page count, typically 12 to 16 pages, depended largely on somebody doing the telesales, i.e., being on the telephone and cold calling potential advertisers, the least popular activity in the collective. Some activist and community groups also took out pages which they edited and designed themselves. When Maggie Thatcher dissolved 'Red' Ken Livingstone's GLC, many sources of advertising dried up and the newspaper folded.

The paper contained several regular sections besides news. Work/Not Work covered employment and unemployment, benefits and Social Security, as a result of which we would be sent press releases from the office of one Gordon Brown, then Shadow Minister for Social Security. Kulcher Klubb contained reviews and interviews. Star interviewees included Monty Python's Graham Chapman on anarchism, punk author Kathy Acker and post-situationist impresario Paul Morley. The back page was littered with listings and classified advertisements akin to those which used to adorn the front pages of the first newspapers. In those pre-Facebook days, the only way to find out what was going on was to constantly check ads, fly posts, often outside tube stations, and flyers distributed in pubs and clubs. A regular review column was served up by one writer under the pseudonym Zloty Furburned.

Leveller Graphics by this time consisted of three people, whose work allowed them to generously donate the use of their office to put the paper together. During the '80s technological advances allowed the office space to progress from an unhealthy atmosphere of Spraymount, used to stick down the golfball typesetting galleys and photographic bromides onto the layout sheets on the parallel motion drawing boards, to an exclusively digital environment facilitated by very early Apple Macintosh computers running Quark Xpress. At some point prior to this, Letraset, which was a system whereby large letters were 'burnished' onto the artwork to form headlines, gave way to a 'headliner' which photographically printed headlines letter by labourious letter and was operated by a foot pedal. The office was littered with unwanted scraps of artwork, the carpet sticky with glue. Such was the backdrop to heated editorial discussions about fidelity to authorship, duties, schedules and ideology to a soundtrack of Paul Morrissey, Jimmy Somerville, Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Bruce Springsteen.

The 10,000 monthly copies were churned out by Private Eye's printers East End Offset, located in the light industrial netherlands east of Central London, driving to which with the artwork in the boot of your car felt like navigating through badlands, especially during the 1984 miners' strike, when the police were liable to stop and search your car. Upon delivery of the printed copies, anyone with a car was prevailed upon to take it to the masses. The capital was divided into several distribution runs, with piles of copies being dumped beneath bemused eyes in student unions, record stores, bookshops and wholefood cafes; we often

wondered what happened to them. Copies were also posted to alternative bookshops around the country, which were permitted to sell them for 10p.

The covers of all the issues of *Monochrome* are reproduced on the pages that follow.

# MONOCHROME

FEEL THINGS • A MAGNET DRAWN • US TOGETHER...

TOP MORE THAN ON PAY NO

**UBAO - CEE IT!** (by George G. 7.10.84)

*Monochrome* (by George G. 7.10.84)

*Refugee* (by George G. 7.10.84)

**DO YOU KNOW**

how many of your fellow trade unionists are unemployed?

From Oct 22-28 people are going to London to draw attention to the 'unemployed' issue - there are meetings, rallies, and a big demonstration on Friday 28th Oct. 1984.

ALISON is campaigning for trade unionists to be recognised as a separate category in the unemployment statistics. For more information about this, send a stamped addressed envelope to: ALISON, 22 West Lamb, London SW2.

**REFUGEE**

Refugees are people who have fled their home countries because of persecution, war, or violence. They are often in need of food, shelter, and medical care. In the UK, refugees are granted asylum and are entitled to certain rights and benefits. However, the process of becoming a refugee can be long and difficult. For more information, contact the Refugee Council.

**MAKE YOUR CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS WITH**

**PROTESTS**

1. WORKERS' COLLECTIVE  
2. WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE  
3. STUDENT COLLECTIVE  
4. YOUTH COLLECTIVE  
5. GAY COLLECTIVE  
6. LESBIAN COLLECTIVE  
7. BICULAR COLLECTIVE

**THE LITTLE WHITE CUBS**

These are the little white cubes that are used in the game of Go. They are made of a special material and are very durable. They are also very attractive and come in a variety of colors. For more information, contact the Little White Cub Company.

**PROTEST PAGE**

1. WORKERS' COLLECTIVE  
2. WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE  
3. STUDENT COLLECTIVE  
4. YOUTH COLLECTIVE  
5. GAY COLLECTIVE  
6. LESBIAN COLLECTIVE  
7. BICULAR COLLECTIVE

LEVELENT  
SUPPLEMENT

**PAY NO  
MORE THAN**



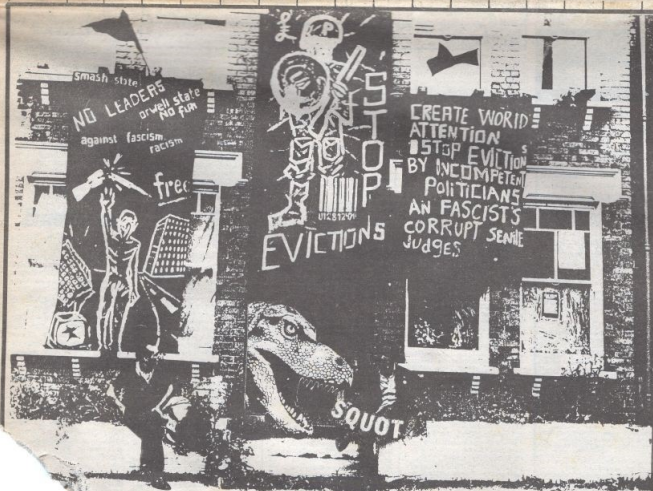
INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR  
REHOUSING APPLICATION  
CAN ONLY BE OBTAINED  
BY TELEPHONING



EXTENSION 2051  
or  
2052

THE RECEPTION DESK CANNOT GIVE  
INFORMATION ABOUT WAITING LIST  
APPLICATIONS

We regret we are unable to discuss your problems at this office.



*don't let houses rot ...*

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KULTUR KLUBB

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### Gremlins at Festival 18

## LISTINGS



100

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LEVELLER SUPPLEMENT
ISSUE No 3 FEBRUARY 1985
PAY NO MORE THAN 10p

MONOCHROME

TAKE IT.

MONOCHROME
MONOCHROME

BENEFIT

Sat Feb 23rd 7.30pm

REPTILES  
BOTSWANA  
GIRLS

FANTASY  
HOWARD YATES  
FIGURES

BET LYNCH  
£1.50+£1  
306 Old Kent Rd

CON-TENTS!

Distorted Facts

Letters

Dingo Proverbs

German Resistance

Anti-Racist Fightback

Surrogacy

\*\*\*\*\*

FEATURES

Scab backers

Miners

Cash in hand work

Peace Camps

\*\*\*\*\*

NEWSLETTERS

Claymants Under Threat

CopyArt

\*\*\*\*\*

KULTUR KLUBB

Toxic Shock

Sade

Reviews

\*\*\*\*\*

LISTINGS

AND

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LEVELLER SUPPLEMENT

MI5 funded

**MONOCHROME**

ISSUE No 4 APRIL 1, 1985

A MONTHLY NEWSPAPER

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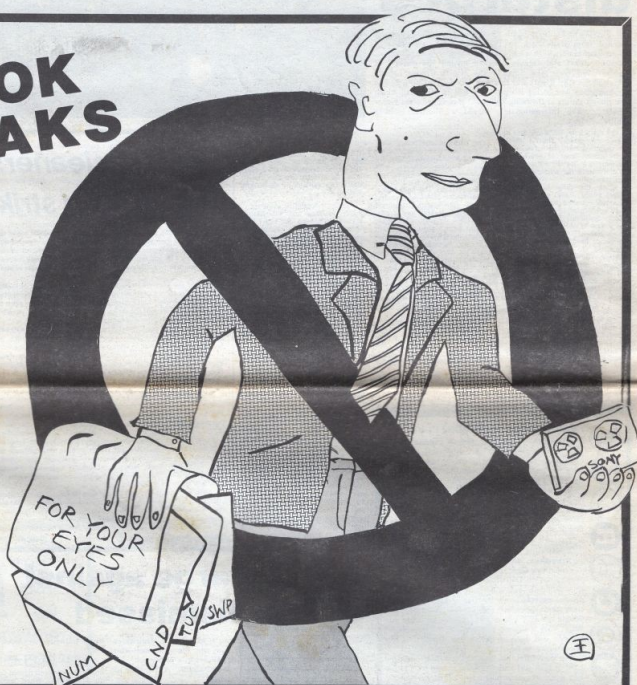
## ANOTHER SPOOK SPEAKS

on CND

AAM

Hilda  
Murrell

Chris  
Mullin



**+** molesworth★aids★miners  
wintex★ graham chapman

**INSIDE: Neil Kinnock self inflating doll**



THE MIGHTY LEVELLER

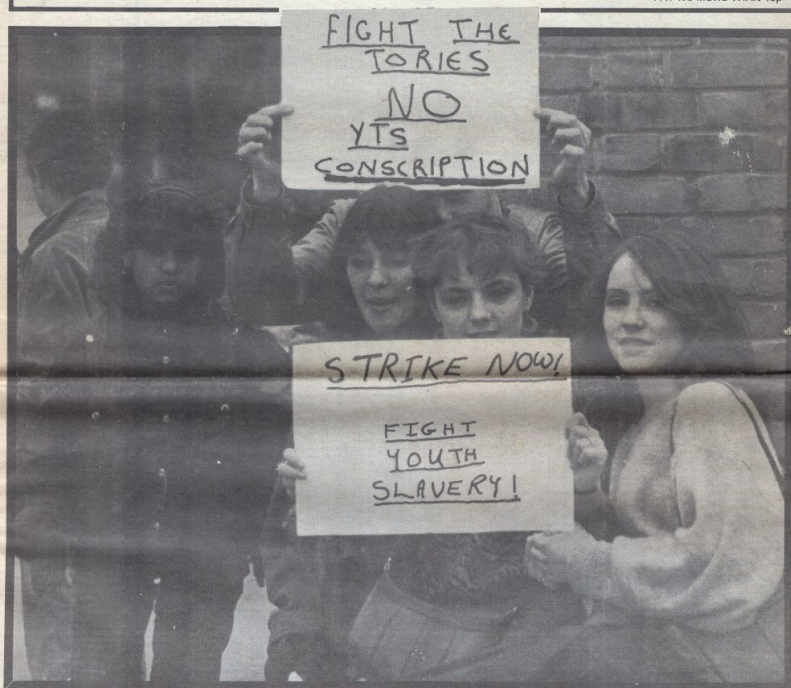
# MONOCHROME

ISSUE NO. 6

JUNE 1985

A MONTHLY NEWSPAPER

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**School's Out, Gay Pride,  
Newham 7, Green Fair,  
Rosalie Bertell, Stonehenge,  
THE OPPOSITION SPEAK OUT — see page 10**





THE MIGHTY LEVELLER

# MONOCHROME

ISSUE No 8 SEPTEMBER 1985

A MONTHLY NEWSPAPER

PAY NO MORE THAN 10p

## APARTHEID TOTTERS



COVER PHOTO: GORDON HUTTON

- **POGUES LASH OUT**   ● **NAZIS IN NEWHAM**
- **PECULIAR CENTRE-SPREAD**   ● **LISTINGS**









THE MIGHTY LEVELLER

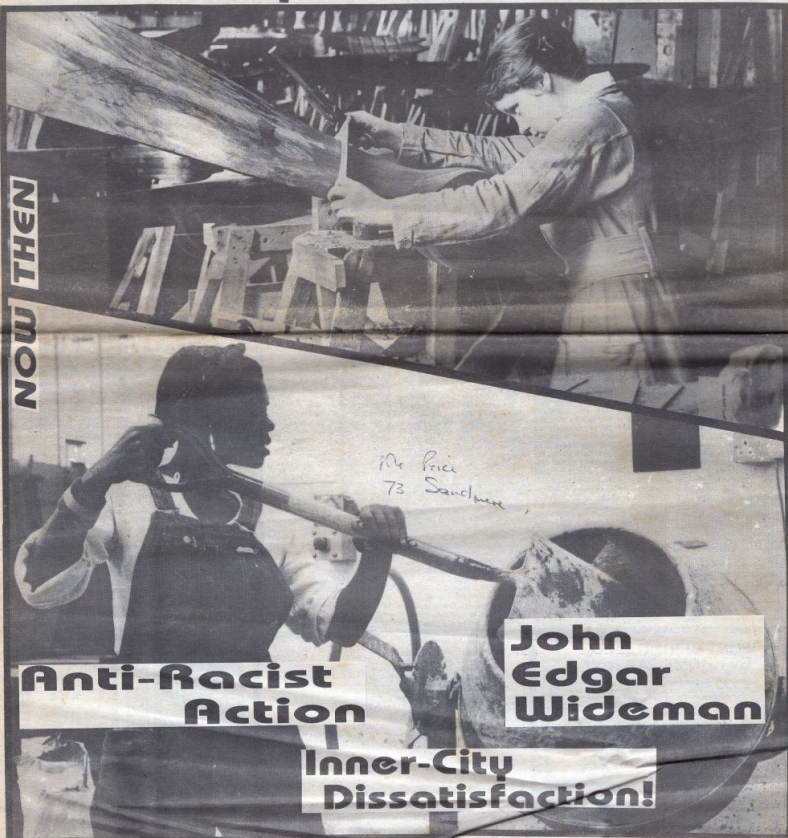
# MONOCHROME

No. 11, February 1988

A MONTHLY NEWSPAPER

FREE !! (10p, newsagents & bookshops.)

## Who Says Women Can't?





THE MIGHTY LEVELLER

# Monochrome.

ISSUE No. 12 MARCH 1986 A MONTHLY NEWSPAPER \*10p FROM BOOKSHOPS

**IN THIS ISSUE**

**We Spit On**  
Rupert **Murdoch**  
★★★★★

**We Listen To**  
Benjamin Zephaniah  
John **Lydon**  
☆☆☆☆

**We Read**  
Kathy **Acker**  
★★★★★★★

**We Talk To**  
Norman **Beaton**  
☆☆☆☆☆☆

**We Expose**  
Nuclear London  
★★★★★★★

Don't be an ass! Join Rupert at Fortrats Wapping and discover the magic of:  
TOP: Friendly staff  
CENTRE: Pleasant offices  
BOTTOM: Free Transport  
See centre pages for more details.

**DON'T BUY**

**THE Sun**

**NEWS OF THE WORLD**

**THE TIMES**  
**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

# Monochrome

ISSUE NO.13 MAY 1986

Resisting  
Rambo:  
Libya,  
Angola,  
Nicaragua

★★★★★

Nocturnal  
Emissions

★★★★★

Andrea  
Dworkin

★★★★★

Wapping  
hots up

★★★★★

Chernovyl  
fall-out

FREE IODINE TABLETS IN  
EVERY OTHER ISSUE . . .



OXFORD STREET DEMO AGAINST US BOMBING OF LIBYA



# Monochrome

FREE

ISSUE NO. 14 MIDSUMMER 1986

Squatting  
in South  
London

\*\*\*\*\*

Afro beat

\*\*\*\*\*

Nuclear  
botches

\*\*\*\*\*

Bomb show  
trial ends

\*\*\*\*\*

Emergency  
Exit

\*\*\*\*\*

News from  
El Salvador  
& Nicaragua

\*\*\*\*\*

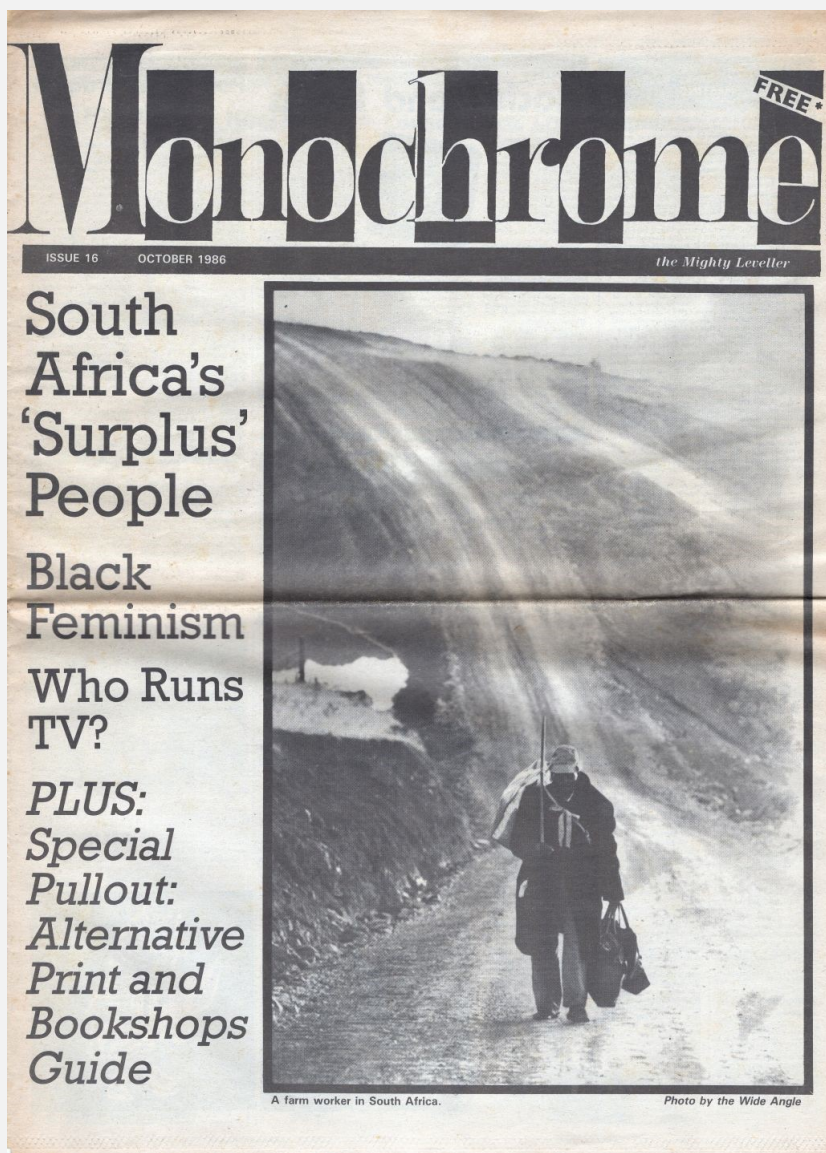
SPECIAL 8 PAGE BUMPER SUMMER ISSUE!!



EL SALVADOR: CIVILIANS UNDER FIRE

PHOTO BY PAUL THOMAS FOR MONOCHROME. EL SALVADOR. CIVILIANS UNDER FIRE. PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL THOMAS







# Monochrome

FREE

ISSUE 17 NOVEMBER 1986

the Mighty Leveller

## PUBLIC ORDER ACT PASSED!

Campaign Against Police Repression

### MARCH

Saturday 29 November

Assemble: 12 noon, Clock Tower  
Place, Market Rd, London N7  
(Close to Caledonian Rd. tube)

Phone 01-881 2938 for details



#### WHAT THE BILL WILL MEAN

The Public Order Bill will give the police extensive new powers to control protest and demonstrations.

**Open air meetings, pickets, vigils etc**  
The police will be able to say how long the meeting will last, where it takes place and how many people can take part if they think it may cause 'serious disruption to the life of the community', ie traffic and shopping.

**Marches**  
Marches will not usually be allowed unless you give the police seven days written notice. They will be able to make last minute changes to the route and impose any other conditions (on size, duration etc) if they think such a march may seriously disrupt their definition of community life.

**New offences**  
The maximum penalty for riot will be 10 years imprisonment and the offence is reworded to make it easier to convict. It will be an offence to use threatening or abusive words or disorderly behaviour within someone's presence that the police think may cause 'alarm' or 'distress'. It will be an offence to organise a demonstration which ignores police directions.



**INSIDE: BROADWATER FARM, NICARAGUAN  
CO-OPS, MACDOLLAR, ELVIS COSTELLO**

# Monochrome

ISSUE 18 LATE WINTER 1987 *the Mighty Leveller*

**WAPPING NIGHTMARE!**

...THE ANTI-UNION LEGISLATION OF SUCCESSIVE TORY GOVERNMENTS HAS LED TO BLATANT ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY THE ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH OF FIRST THE MINERS AND NOW THE PRINTERS, ALWAYS TWO OF THE STRONGEST AND TIGHTEST UNIONS IN BRITAIN...

**WOT A**

... I went to work who will jump down  
I say jump I went to work who will sign  
every day... I say jump...

... the violent dispersal by riot police of 15,000 people ...

**PUBLIC ORDER ACT UPDATE**

**AIDS: Homeopathy gives new hope**

- CONTRAGATE • M.S.C. SEXISM • REVIEWS
- Letter from Neil Pillock • LISTINGS

**FREE PACKET OF feminaxo INSIDE!!**

WARNING: BELIEVING NEWSPAPERS CAN CAUSE PERMANENT BRAIN DAMAGE



ISSUE 19    JUNE 1987

### *the Mighty Leveller*

TUESDAY, May 13, 1987

ir Left routed in manifesto defence battle

Labour  
disaster  
QUOTE  
"violence,"

...on every aspect of  
policy, I don't know.  
Mr Healey stressed that on nuclear  
disarmament the Labour Party was  
...to Mr Reagan  
...the right, because the

No longer possible for Labour to deny the takeover?

about  
promis  
wome  
nin

Dear Monochrome  
You're a crowd of...

**★ELECTION SPECIAL★ World Exclus**

**Kinnock out  
to steal Tory  
crime vote**

...rations want to extend further  
...control on the private rented  
...sector.

A senior Conservative official  
...that part of the manifesto  
...detached they would  
...for their unpopu-  
...larity.

# Snatcher and

Kinnock both  
seek to take  
moral ground


By James Nease  
and Peter Hetherington  
Mrs. Thacker and Mr. Sed  
Kinnoch, both set out how  
their status, *Rocky's* in-  
volvement as a  
Prime work, job, deal,  
and money-making, hanky-panky; crime 954 n. law-  
breaking.  
Adj. *disheveled, misleading 914 adj.*  
wrong; not particular, unfashionable  
aquariumish: *unpleasant*

conscienceless; shameless, dead to honour; unethical, immoral 334 adj. wicked; shaky, untrustworthy, unreliable, undependable; disingenuous, straightforward, insincere 541 adj. hypocritical; opportunistic, slippery, snaky, fox 698 adj. cunning; underhand 523 adj. latent; not straight, indirect, crooked, devious, oblique, suspicious

curious; illicit 954 adj. *illegal*; foul;  
dishonourable 867 adj. *disreputable*; in-  
digne, ungentlemanly, unmanly, un-  
indomest.  
rascally, criminal, felonious 954 adj.  
vicious; knavish, picaresque, spivish,  
amphib; infamous, villainous; scurvy,  
low-down, yellow.

**Wally** ...roy, paltry, little, contemptible 639

SPECIAL ISSUE OF

**Claimants Under Threat**  **pages 6-7**

★  
EL SALVADOR

## ★ FIDDLING THE UNEMPLOYED

★  
PUBLIC ORDER  
ARRESTS

★  
KALAHARI  
SURFERS

★  
CND CIRCUS  
★  
RACIST MENTAL

RACIST MENTAL  
HEALTH  
★  
THOUGHTS ON RACE

★  
COPYART  
★

**Hooligan Press, reviews, listings**


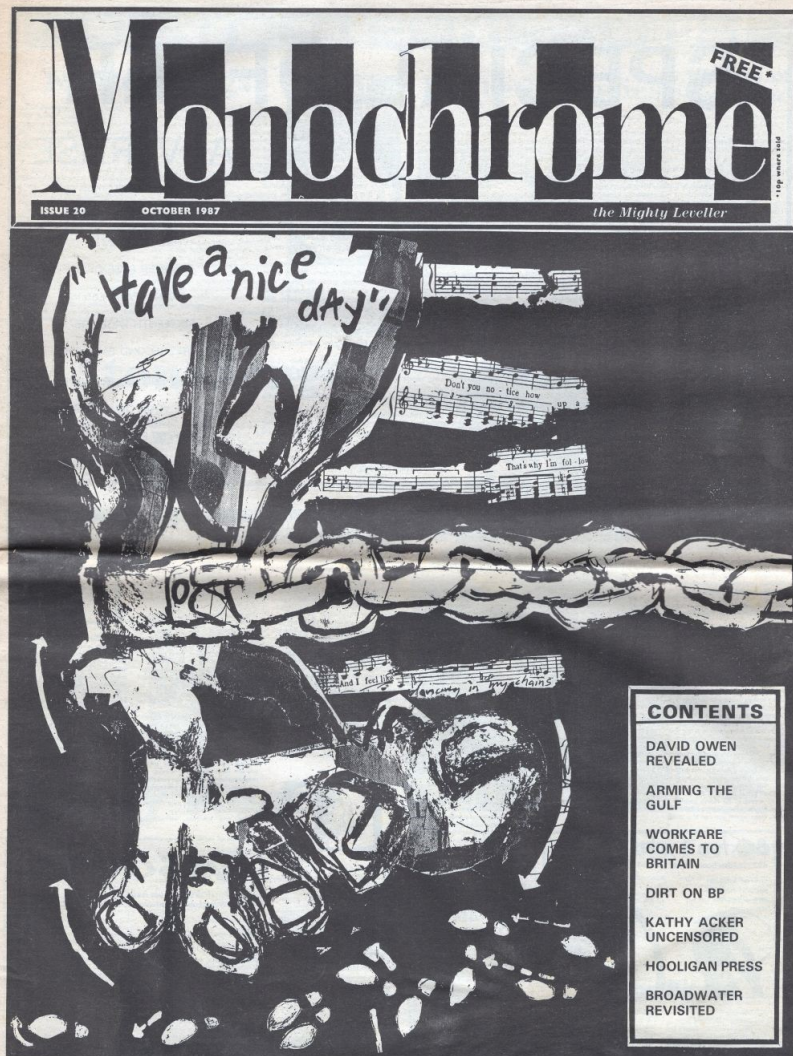


Photo-montage by Glenn Kinnock

★ELECTION SPECIAL★ World Exclusive: Pillock Speaks - page 9





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DAVID OWEN  
REVEALED

ARMING THE  
GULF

WORKFARE  
COMES TO  
BRITAIN

DIRT ON BP

KATHY ACKER  
UNCENSORED

HOOLIGAN PRESS

BROADWATER  
REVISITED

